

Amity man harmonizes in silver-medal quartet

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As a teenager, Mark Sanders' desire was to play football - until he injured his back as a middle linebacker at Muhlenberg High School.

But his talent was singing and playing the piano and sousaphone.

That talent was resoundingly confirmed recently when baritone Sanders, 64, of Amity Township, part of the barbershop quartet Faces 4 Radio, captured the silver medal at the Barbershop Harmony Society's international senior quartet competition in Orlando, Fla.

The quartet impressed the judges singing "It's You," from the musical "The Music Man," and an original tune called "End of the Road."

Faces 4 Radio, organized in the spring of 2012, competed against 28 quartets, 17 of them from North American districts and the rest from Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, Sweden and seven wild card invitees.

To qualify as a senior quartet in the Barbershop Harmony Society, the average age of the performers must be at least 60 years old, and no individual can be younger than 55.

Besides Sanders, Faces 4 Radio is composed of tenor Bob Bristow, Ambler, Montgomery County; lead singer Brad Brooks, Harrisburg; and bass Jeff Winik, Kendall Park, N.J.



Courtesy of Faces 4 Radio
Faces 4 Radio barbershop quartet members are, from left, Bob Bristow, Ambler, Montgomery County; Brad Brooks, Harrisburg; Jeff Winik, Kendall Park, N.J., and Mark Sanders, Amity Township.

"Our mentality really wasn't to go into this competition to win," said Sanders, who will be celebrating 50 years of barbershop singing in 2015 and served as music director the Reading Pretzel City Chorus for about eight years. He also is a member of the Bryn Mawr Mainliners, another barbershop chorus in Malvern, Chester County.

"We were just trying to do our best because I had some vocal problems with allergies and we also had a bass who failed a stress test and just had an operation to put in a stent," Sanders said.

Overcoming physical challenges, Faces 4 Radio pushed on and excelled.

"Now we will be doing a lot more preparing and rehearsing for the competition next January to be held in Long Beach, Calif.," Sanders said.

These barbershoppers have made the cut in the top tier of four-part barbershop singing, a special form because the harmony part tops the melody part, which creates the distinctive overtones.

"It's a unique sound that has a niche following," Sanders said. "But over the past years, interest has held pretty steady. When I started, there were about 30,000 members and now there are about 26,000 (in the Barbershop Harmony Society International)."

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